

## **The West Midlands District of the Methodist Church**

### **District Statement of Needs** (as required by Standing Order 423)

The new West Midlands Methodist District is being formed from the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury and Birmingham Districts on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025. The two districts have a long history of working together. Both have similar outlooks and mission priorities and both value collaborative leadership, but do have different approaches and ways of working. The new district needs someone who can lead a team taking the best practice from each existing district, along with creative ideas and good practice and innovations from elsewhere so the new district becomes more than simply a merging or mixing of what currently happens.

A Joint District Task Group is working with Transforming Churches and Communities as project management consultants for the merger. We hope to have a senior leaders' team recruited or identified in time for the May Synods and all the necessary charity governance requirements met by September but at the start of the new district not everything will be sorted out or set up. Someone with experience of helping to establish a new organisation or bringing together two organisations will be invaluable. For 2025-6 there will be two joint chairs as Revd Novette Headley will remain in a chair's role for one year. This should allow for some continuity particularly around the autumn 2025 stationing. It also will be an opportunity to model collaborative ministry as both will oversee the whole area and not have separate geographical responsibilities. How tasks are divided will need to be agreed between you and the senior leaders' team. The Nomination Panel feels that a new chair needs to be non-partisan and comes fresh to the role seeking to understand the district as a whole rather than knowing it as two parts. The new chair will need to get out and about not stay in the office, discover and learn and get to know people and places and build relationships.

The only circuit that did not support the merger proposals was Shropshire and the Marches. As a circuit on the edge of the district they can feel marginalised and that their rural context is poorly understood. Ensuring enfranchisement of members in the many different contexts across the new district will be an essential task and the chair will need to be able to engage with a great diversity of people.

As across the connexion Covid accelerated membership decline and nearly all the 20 circuits have had to take painful decisions to close churches and or reduce ministerial staff numbers. Many of the faithful, lay and ordained, are tired but they are still devoted and continue to serve. The new chair will need to be able to offer ideas and support and encouragement, inspiring and uplifting worship, enable opportunities for reflection and development and model a rhythm of life that enables

The  
**Methodist**  
Church

West  
**Midlands**  
District

flourishing. For the last five years Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury has led an Eastertide Pilgrimage which folk from Birmingham are starting to join in with. Birmingham has offered an annual ministerial retreat.

But tiredness and decline are not everywhere. There are churches that are growing. Social action projects that are vital to their communities. The new chair will need to be able to support innovation and developing mission opportunities. Birmingham District was part of the first phase of the 'God for All' funding and has developed two district NPNP projects with Street Banquet working with the homeless in central Birmingham and at Birmingham University. While Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury were in the third phase of 'God for All' funding they are pioneering support for additional needs. Three circuit NPNP projects are underway. Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury earlier piloted the connexional project for District Property Advisors. Together the two districts piloted the Community Faith Organising role that 'God for All' part 2 plans to roll out across the connexion. Another highlight of the districts' joint working is the Amplify Residential Youth weekend that is held in March with over 100 young people along with their leaders and a team of more than 20 volunteers gathering in 2024.

Pastoral care of ministers will always be a Chair's priority. Linked to this are stationing and the managing of the safeguarding, complaints and disciplinary processes of the church. Conversations with circuits and ministers about profiles and how these develop from their mission plans and priorities are crucial. A skilled and reflective supervisor is needed but while the Chair has responsibility for ministerial supervision the District has a small team who share in overseeing the Supervision Implementation Plan.

The new chair will need to be able to represent the District in the Connexion and to represent the Conference and wider Connexion in the District having an awareness of and an ability to communicate Connexional priorities. They will need to be able to be proactive in taking a lead in representational roles in the community and ecumenically. While experience of developing interfaith understanding and partnerships will be an advantage as they come to serve amongst the diverse communities within the West Midlands region.